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NEW U. S. PLEDGE: AID FOR VIET NAM

By Marguerite Higgins

WASHINGTON, MAY 3.—The United States has assured South Viet Nam of any necessary help to enable it to hold out against Communist attack, guerrilla or otherwise, it was learned tonight.

These assurances could mean the dispatch of American military force if this were asked, but South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem has made no such request and indicates that he wants to fight his own battles.

Party Behind Kennedy

President Kennedy was able to send these assurances, informants said, in the knowledge that he had the majority of his own party behind him.

In recent White House conferences, Congressional leaders such as J. William Fulbright, who had reservations about intervening in Laos, said however that they would go along with using American forces if necessary to shore up other southeast Asian nations threatened by the deteriorating situation in Laos.

Mr. Kennedy's assurances were intended to bolster the morale of southwest Asian nations who feared that anation in Laos might mean that the United States was prepared to stand by and see all of southeast Asia go down the drain rather than risk American lives to save an ally.

The Administration has already agreed to increase aid to Viet Nam in a variety of ways, including a \$41,000,000 increase in military aid.

Other Offer

Mr. Kennedy's assurances of any necessary help for South Viet Nam were the second time this week that he has made such a strong unconditional offer when a peace being threatened by the paratroop invasion from the Right-wing military junta in Algeria, President Kennedy sent a similar message to President Charles de Gaulle.

Philippe de Gaulle Thursday explained why he dispatches on call by the and its allies in Asia Treaty Or-

hambered out during a nearly five-hour emergency meeting by the National Security Council.

[A communique issued at the close of the meeting said the council directed the Foreign Office to "transmit to the SEATO council representative the determination of the Philippine government to faithfully comply with its obligation under the treaty and, specifically, under the resolution of the SEATO council of ministers of March 29, 1961."]

Harriman Affirms Pledge

It is reported here that the President's assurance which amount to drawing the line in Asia—and saying "no further" to Communist pressure were reaffirmed by roving Ambassador W. Averell Harriman today when he visited Saigon, the South Viet Nam capital.

South Viet Nam is pock-marked with Red infiltrators abetted by Communist regime in the north of the country with headquarters at Hanoi.

Reports today of continuing Communist rebel attacks in southern Laos were viewed here as a deliberate attempt to gain the key road junction on the main highway to neighboring South Viet Nam for the purpose of raising havoc southward later—but probably sooner.

Although the rebel approach to the vital highway marred the Laotian picture, officials here were allowing themselves for the first time to hope that the waning fighting elsewhere might at last lead to a ceasefire.

But Secretary of State Dean Rusk took the lead in warning that even if a cease fire is achieved in Laos "many difficulties lie ahead."

A ceasefire, it is conceded would end the dilemma of having to choose between sending American troops to Laos or else of waffling on public promises not to let the Communists gobble the country up.

Another Dilemma

But the kind of hot dilemma merely leads to another. The nightmare prospect of trying to wrest an "Austrian-like" Laos out of negotiations with fourteen nations, including Red China and the Soviet Union, under circumstances in which the Communists have already seized nearly two-thirds of the country with military might.

It was unclear here whether the Communist offensive in the vicinity of the main highway south to Viet Nam had reached its target. But it was felt that the military action in this area—even if it halts in

the next twenty-four hours—would poised the Communist troops in such a manner that they could cut this highway at any time.

Washington's view is that a priority Communist expansion of their Laotian military bridgehead has been to bring the center of Communist power closer to South Viet Nam.